

Spring INTO CLEANING

Having trouble finding the motivation to begin the big tidy-up? Here's expert advice on how to get started

MAKE A LIST

Actually, more than one. Home-cleaning guru Shannon Lush has three. "One is for daily tasks, another for weekly jobs and then there's the master list," she says. Daily tasks include putting out the garbage and wiping surfaces; weekly jobs include turning your mattress or cleaning the fridge. The master list covers things that need to be done every few months (washing pillows) or annually (servicing appliances).

MAKE IT EASY ON YOURSELF

Lush keeps multiple sets of cleaning materials around the house, "One in the bathroom, another in the kitchen, and so on. I store them where they're easy to reach." She also has one vacuum cleaner for upstairs and another for downstairs. "It saves time and means I don't have to lug one all over the house."

Interior stylist Jane Brown believes that when it comes to cleaning products, less is more. "You can end up with a spray for this and a solution for that," she explains. "These products often contain the same ingredients but are just rebranded for different purposes. When you find one you love, stick with it."

CLEAN A ROOM A DAY

If tackling the house as a whole feels daunting, break it down room-by-room. It should take only 15 minutes to clean a room using the 'clutter bucket' process Lush describes in her book, *Speed Cleaning*. "It's easy," she insists. "Grab a big bucket, put inside anything that doesn't belong in the room and leave it outside. Then clean the room, top to bottom, starting at the ceiling. Once you've finished, put away everything that's in the bucket."

GIVE YOURSELF A BREAK

"It's not possible to live up to some make-believe ideal," says Brown. "I know people who have cleaners who don't meet their expectations, because everyone has a different sense of what's clean." Instead, she suggests letting go of the need for perfection. "Don't be seduced by Martha Stewart. It's one thing to dream of living in a five-star hotel, but that's not reality. Life isn't perfect, and neither do you have to be."

GET THE FAMILY INVOLVED

Everyone from teens to young children can help. "To make a teenager clean their room, throw a hula hoop on the messiest part and

ask them to clean what's inside the circle," says Lush. "Move it each day and, by the end of the week, the room's clean." Even toddlers can be taught to tidy. "Put labels on drawers and make it a game to put the right things in the right drawers."

HAVE AN EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN

When you get a call to say the in-laws are on their way, and the place looks a mess, you need a game plan. "Clutter bucket each room. It's the fastest way to make a big difference," says Lush. Then wipe over all the surfaces to clear off dust and fingerprints. "You can whiz through a house in two minutes," she says.

THINK OF THE BIG PICTURE

Need motivation? Imagine how you'll feel when the kitchen is sparkling, instead of thinking of the enormity of the task ahead. And don't forget to reward yourself at the end. "I buy myself fresh flowers," says Brown, "and I restock the fruit basket. Not only is it a visual reminder I'm living a healthy life, it looks beautiful." Treat yourself to anything that will make you look forward to cleaning, says Lush: "Cleaning should put a smile on your face." ■ **NIGEL BARTLETT**